God Is One

By Martin H. Scharlemann

"HEAR, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone."[1] With this resounding formula God's ancient people was introduced to the summary statement of its responsibilities toward the God of the covenant, that is, to the first and greatest commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." This whole passage is known as the *Shema'*, from the first Hebrew word. And even though the precise formulation of this statement, as we now have it, may date from the time of Josiah's reforms, as modern Old Testament scholars generally agree, the thought and context of this credo go back to the days when the covenant was established at Sinai through Moses.

On that occasion Israel was committed to the exclusive service of Yahweh as the God who had delivered them from the house of bondage. By this act of liberation Yahweh had revealed himself as the Lord of history and of nature. The full consequences of this revelation, however, do not seem to have been drawn at once in terms of a recognition that this one God excluded all other deities. Jephthah, for example, seems to have assumed that Chemosh was quite properly the god of the Ammonites (Judg. 11:23, 24), even as Yahweh was Israel's Lord. Most certainly David believed that other gods ruled outside the confines of Israel (I Sam. 26:19): and what he said to Saul on this occasion leaves no doubt that this was a generally accepted view of his day. King Ahaz, moreover, at a much later date is described as sacrificing to the gods of Damascus, who, as he believed, had defeated him (II Chron. 28:23), and there is no suggestion at all in the text that these gods did not really exist. Even the first of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3) seems to presuppose the existence of other gods, even if, as L. Koehler first proposed,[2] the *'al pānay* of the text means "in opposition to me" rather than "before me."[3]

Israel's worship, therefore, probably ought to be described as monolatrous rather than monotheistic until such time as the existence of other gods was specifically denied and Yahweh was proclaimed as the God of the whole world. The supreme articulation of this kind of monotheism is found in the book of Isaiah (45:22): "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is none other." The distance, however, from Sinai to Isaiah's formulation is considerable. Centuries of history lie between these two statements. These were long years during which God's people came into contact with nations that served other gods, whose existence they did not at first deny, but whose inferiority to Yahweh was made plain at once.

This movement from monolatry to monotheism is an inherent ingredient of the biblical account of Israel's life and worship. The record of this development may serve, therefore, as a primary exhibit of the way in which God manifested himself through mighty historical deeds in such a way as to make it possible for his people to express this aspect of the divine self-disclosure in the formulations that we have in the later books of the Old Testament.

The general thrust of God's revelation and of Israel's faith is unmistakable. The biblical record does not leave us in doubt that, once the implications of accepting Yahweh as God had worked themselves out fully in the faith and life of his people, nothing less than full monotheism could possibly result. For Israel kept in mind that it had been chosen by that one God who, in his holiness and jealousy, could not by virtue of these qualities tolerate the existence of other gods and a belief in idols, whether by Jew or Gentile.

The roots of Israel's belief that God is one certainly reach back as far as the time of the patriarchs. We read in Gen. 14 that, when Melchizedek came out to bless Abram after the defeat of Chedarlaomer and his allies, he said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High (*'ēl 'elyôn*), maker of heaven and earth: and blessed be the God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand" (vv. 19 and 20).

Now, there was a time when this account was interpreted as being no more than a literary creation. Echoes of this approach are found as late as 1944 in G. Levi Della Vida's suggestion that the name *'ēl 'elyôn* was artificially compounded out of *'ēl*, the lord of earth, and *'elyôn*, the lord of heaven,[4] and that the purpose of the narrative was to emphasize the identity of Melchizedek's God with the God of Abram. The view that the Genesis account proposed to fuse two gods was supported in times past by pointing to the fact that in verse 22 the name Yahweh was used in combination with *'ēl 'elyôn*. There Abram is depicted as swearing "to the Lord [Yahweh] God Most High." However, there is some question as to whether the original text really contained the name Yahweh, especially since the Septuagint does not have it.

Despite the absence of the name Yahweh from verse 22, this story is generally considered to be a Yahwist section. That is to say, those who work with the documentary hypothesis believe that the present form and wording of this narrative date from the time of David even though the original was included by Moses in his account of the patriarchs. In fact, it has been suggested that the editors of David's time took a particular interest in this story because of its stress on the religious significance of Jerusalem, now that it had become the city of David,[5] for

1 Of the four translations offered by the Revised Standard Version for Deut. 6:4, this one seems to do fullest justice to the Hebrew. The usual translation, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord," is influenced by the Septuagint translation, which is quoted by Jesus at Mark 12:29.

2 Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich, 1957), I, 203, Note 28.

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4 "El 'Elyon," in *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, lxiii (1949), p. 9.

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Melchizedek was the king of Salem, which was later called Jerusalem. Be that as it may—and it is no more than a guess!—the narrative concerning Melchizedek does associate the patriarch Abram with the worship of a god whom extra-biblical sources describe as having ruled over a pantheon of gods, as a divine being superior, therefore, to others. Albrecht Alt has also shown that other passages referring to "the God of the fathers" actually reflect historical situations and developments that relate to the fusion of various tribal traditions into the one worship of Yahweh.[6]

If Alt's contention is correct, there is every reason to assume a connection between Abram and *'ēl 'elyôn*. In that case the patriarch took an oath in the name of a god whom he considered to be "the creator of heaven and earth." In other words the Melchizedek incident indicates that Abram believed in a god superior to others and who was the creator of heaven and earth. This can only mean that the road to monotheism in Israel begins in the patriarchal period.[7]

A great advance, of course, was made at the time of Moses. This is almost universally recognized. In point of fact, Albright goes so far as to say, "If the term 'monotheist' means one who teaches the existence of only one God, the creator of everything, the source of justice, who is equally powerful in Egypt, in the desert, and in Palestine, who has no sexuality and no mythology, who is human in form but cannot be seen by human eye and cannot be represented in any form—then the founder of Yahwism was certainly a monotheist."[8] Yet, in introducing Israel to Yahweh, Moses did not specifically exclude the existence of other gods. This is suggested by a sentence in Miriam's Song of Deliverance, sung at the moment of liberation at the Sea, "Who is like thee, o Lord, among the gods?" (Ex. 15:11). Such a wording of the question seems to assume that there might be other gods. H. H. Rowley, therefore, may be quite right in saying, "Moses was less than a monotheist, but he was more than a henotheist."[9]

In the last analysis, the revelation of God's name as Yahweh was less significant in this respect then attributing to him the qualities of holy (*gōdhesh*) and jealous (*gin'â*). For when once the implications of these two concepts were drawn out nothing less than "cultic intolerance" could follow.

A belief in the holiness of Yahweh was not born of reflection on the nature of God. It was derived from a living association with the God of the covenant in the light of the consuming intensity of Israel's experience at Mt. Sinai. Strictly speaking, the holiness of Yahweh is not one quality among others. It is rather a characteristic that subsumes every quality of God active in his power to have his rule prevail in and among men so that they might live.[10]

6 Albrecht Alt, *Der Gott der Väter* (Stuttgart, 1929), p. 23.

7 "It is now possible to recover with a certain assurance the gods whom the patriarchs worshiped." H. G. May, "The Patriarchal Idea of God," in *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, lx (1941), p. 113.

8 W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore, 1946), p. 207.

9 "The Antiquity of Israelite Monotheism," in *Expository Times*, lxi (1949-50), p. 336.

10 Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, 1958), p. 87. "The essential aspect of holiness is that of power, but of power in the service of a God who uses all things to make his kingdom triumph."

The view that God is an unapproachable being is not specifically Hebraic in origin. It is found in all Semitic religions and consisted primarily of an awareness that there is a vitiating force in man that prevents full communion with the divine. Hence there is in holiness a notion of separation. The concept actually has independent existence until Yahweh takes possession of it. Then it becomes the power that communicates itself in terms of creative intent.

This particular aspect of God's holiness is brought out by Hosea, when he says (11:9), "I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy." This is a significant bit of revelation, for such sheer otherness as is ascribed to Yahweh would normally suggest destruction for all that is not holy. Since Yahweh's holiness is the source of life rather than of death, Isaiah appeals to the people of Jerusalem, menaced as they are by the king of Assyria, that they let God be their fear and dread (8:13). That is to say, they were to let that awe which derives from manifesting Yahweh as holy by their attitudes and actions displace the proximate fear of Rezin and the son of Remaliah. Here holiness is spelled out in terms of depth-psychology as a force that overcomes other fears. Inherent in holiness is its power of displacement.

Yahweh, as the Holy One of Israel, therefore is by his very nature the source of a progressive dethronement of deities in the history of Israel. His holiness is unique and therefore excludes the claims of other gods. This particular emphasis is very strong in the so-called priestly sections. There, however, it is applied primarily on the level of ritual, food, and sex because it was in these areas that God's people incurred the danger of syncretism. Since Yahweh was holy, his people must separate themselves from the religious practices of their Canaanite environment (Lev. 11:44 ff.). This kind of emphasis obviously strengthened the view that God is one.

True, the priestly application of Yahweh's uniqueness led to a point where holiness seemed available to men within a proper system of religious rites—a line that led directly into the post-Maccabean period, where the major features of Jewish religion as practised in the days of our Lord were determined. However, this was not the prophetic view of God's holiness. The prophets kept insisting that man has no power of autonomy, and that God is not within the realm of men's apprehension. It is in this sense that we must understand the Commandment (Ex. 20:4; Deut. 5:8), "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image." Here we find the implication that God is not equal to any other object. This principle is applied also to the adoration of heavenly constellations. The book of Isaiah is particularly explicit in its polemic against the elaborate cosmogonies and cosmologies of Babylon (Isa. 40:25, 26):

> To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.
> Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and, because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, is outside and above all things. Hence the

masses in Israel, exposed as they were to lesser gods, had to be reformed again and again. If Yahweh's holy will was to prevail there must be no distinction between the formal cult of the nation and private worship. Here is the source of the ethical element in Israel's monotheism. After all, holiness was a relational power, operative within the context of a covenant, whose terms directed themselves also to the individual in Israel.[11] Holiness, therefore, has its social implications for men in a covenant order of things. No one is more emphatic on this point than Amos, when, for example, the immoral behavior of a father and a son toward a girl is described in terms of profaning the Holy Name (2:7).

Yahweh, then, does not keep his holiness to himself. He is the covenant God, with power to deliver his people. In other words, he is a jealous God, determined to carry out his redemptive plan in history against all possible opposition. At this point the uniqueness of Israel's God becomes particularly clear. The gods of other religions are also described as jealous: but this is mere envy, a self-centered concern for personal honor and official jurisdiction. There is none of this in Yahweh. The very fact that he had established a covenant provided the evidence that he was a God who had broken out of his isolation to communicate with other beings. At the same time, this covenant was an expression of Yahweh's saving will. If men were to live, they would be obliged to obey this single will of One who had created them. Resistance was met with judgment, particularly against such as were "no-gods": the projection of man's wealth, success, and goods (Deut. 32:21). Yahweh, therefore, demands all. Since this is impossible, God is one who forgives. This seems to be the significance of Joshua's words at Shechem, "You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will forgive your transgressions and your sins" (Josh. 24:19).[12]

Transgression kindles God's anger, which is the other side of his covenant love. This wrath manifests itself in violent actions against those who oppose Yahweh's single will. At first this applies to Israel itself, even though it was God's own *seghullā* (Ex. 19:5). Joshua emphasized this point at the time of the Shechem covenant (cf. Josh. 24:20). In time, however, this jealousy is interpreted as God's vindication of Israel against its enemies. It becomes a jealousy *for* Israel, beginning with the time of Ezekiel, where, for instance, we read (38:16), "In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes." From this point forward Yahweh's jealousy appears in eschatological contexts and soon loses itself in the weird fantasies of apocalyptic literature.

For the development of full monotheism in Israel just this shift in the concept of jealousy is of profound significance. It testifies to the determination on the part of God to see his will established against all opposing beings and entities, be they individuals, nations, or other gods. Universal authority is an essential ingredient of monotheism. Yahweh's zeal to fulfill his purposes in history is the driving power behind the creation of this kind of faith.

11 Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig, 1933), I, 111.

12 The omission of the negative is supported by rather significant texts.

Historically speaking, Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on the heights of Carmel ranks as a decisive moment in Israel. Here Yahweh's holiness was pitted against *the* Baal, not a local deity but a god of heaven, worshiped in Tyre and Sidon and introduced into Israel primarily by Jezebel.[13] In this incident are concentrated the seven centuries of conflict between Yahweh and Baal, and Israel must make a choice between the two. They can not both be gods in Israel. Within this context Yahweh made himself known by a mighty miracle, and the people were moved to exclaim, "The Lord [i.e., Yahweh], he is God; the Lord, he is God" (I Kings 18:39). This is practical monotheism, understood as acceptance of that one God whose holiness in action excludes the possibility that other gods exist. But despite Israel's choice on Mt. Carmel, and despite the ascription to Yahweh of functions associated with Baal on the level of popular belief, such as fertility of the soil (Hos. 2:8) and political powers (Hos. 7:11), Yahweh remained a stranger to this world.[14] He continued to be "the wholly Other," but as the living God and not as a philosophical abstraction.

In terms of faith-miles it is not far from Mt. Carmel to the point at which Jeremiah can say of other gods that they are man's handiwork (*ma'asēh yādim*), where Ezekiel does not hesitate to speak of them as "manure gods" (*gillūlim*), and when the Psalms refer to them as "no-gods" (*lō' 'elōhîm*). For these gods have no history. They are newcomers (Deut. 32:17). Yahweh, however, has been Israel's God from of old (Ps. 74:2).

We must at this point insist that this movement toward full and unequivocal monotheism can not be interpreted in terms of an evolutionary process. On the contrary, this advance has its source in the absolute uniqueness of Yahweh as he revealed himself to Israel in his holiness and jealousy. We might speak of this as cumulative, rather than progressive, revelation.

It is of great significance to note in this connection that there is no Hebrew word for "goddess." Israel's God is never depicted as having a female counterpart,[15] except at Elephantine in Egypt during the sixth century—at a place far removed from the center of Israel's religious life. There we do have notices of Anat Bethel (*Anat Yahu*) as a consort of Yahweh. Otherwise there is no reference to a Hebrew goddess. This consistent insistence on the oneness of Yahweh makes it possible for Hosea (1-3) and Ezekiel (16:23) to speak of Yahweh as Israel's husband without fear of being misunderstood.

By the time of Ezra any mention of other gods in a context that referred to Yahweh was unthinkable.[16] Heathen gods were turned into angels or even demons, as in the Septuagint, translation of Psalm 95 and in certain apocryphal books. At the same time the transcendence of Yahweh got further emphasis by the use of such circumlocutions as "the heavens," "the power," "the Shekinah," "the place

13 G. v. Rad, *ThdAT*, p. 208.

14 Gerhard von Rad, *op. cit.*, I, 204: "Der grosse Fremdling in der Welt."

15 Eichrodt, *op. cit.*, I, 111.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

of Yahweh's presence," or, most frequently, "the Name." The tetragram was not even to be uttered.

Somewhat parallel and contemporary to these developments runs a tendency to hypostasize the Torah or even Wisdom by ascribing to them a kind of pre-existence. The beginnings of this outlook are possibly found in the use of "the word of Yahweh" as almost distinct from God himself, and in the reference to the Spirit of God "moving over the face of the waters" in the account of creation. At any rate, it seems to be in order to suggest that this trend in Israel was intended to serve as a way of preparing God's people for that self-disclosure of himself whereby, in and through the incarnation, men would be invited to recognize this God as being triune, that is, one God in three persons.

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[The following is OCR'd text from photocopied original – see above.]

God Is One

By MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN

"HEAR, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone."[1] With this resounding formula God's ancient people was introduced to the summary statement of its responsibilities toward the God of the covenant, that is. to the first and greatest commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." This whole passage is known as the *Shema',* from the first Hebrew word. And even though the precise formulation of this statement, as we now have it, may date from the time of Josiah's reforms, as modern Old Testament scholars generally agree, the thought and context of this credo go hack to the days when the covenant was established at Sinai through Moses.

On that occasion Israel was committed to the exclusive service of Yahweh as the God who had delivered them from the house of bondage. Bv this act of liberation Yahweh had revealed himself as the Lord of history and of nature. The full consequences of this revelation, however, do not seem to have been drawn at once in terms of a recognition that this one God excluded all other deities. Jephtha, for example, seems to have assumed that Chemosh was quite properly the god of the Ammonites (Judg. 11:23, 24), even as Yahweh was Israel's Lord. Most certainly David believed that. other gods ruled outside the confines of Israel (I Sam. 26:19): and what he said to Saul on this occasion leaves no doubt that this was a generally accepted view of his day. King Ahaz, moreover, at a much later date is described as sacrificing to the gods of Damascus, who, as he believed, had defeated him (II Chron. 28:23). and there is no suggestion at all in the text that these gods did not really exist. Even the first of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3) seems to presuppose the existence of other gods, even if, as L. Koehler first proposed,[2] the *'al panay* of the text means "in opposition to me" rather than "before me." [3]

Israel's worship, therefore, probably ought to be described as monolatrous rather than monotheistic until such time as the existence of other gods was specifically denied and Yahweh was proclaimed as the God of the whole world. The supreme articulation of this kind of monotheism is found in the book of Isaiah (45:22) : "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am

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God, and there is none other." The distance, however, from Sinai to Isaiah's formulation is considerable. Centuries of history lie between these two statements. These were long years during which God's people came into contact with nations that served other gods, whose existence they did not at first deny, but whose inferiority to Yahweh was made plain at once.

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The roots of Israel's belief that God is one certainly reach back as far as the time of the patriarchs. We read in Gen. 14 that, when Melchizedek came out to bless Abram after the defeat of Chedarlaomer and his allies, he said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High *('el 'elyon),* maker of heaven and earth: and blessed be the God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand (w. 19 and 20).

Now, there was a time when this account was interpreted as being no more than a literary creation. Echoes of this approach are found as late as 1944 in G. Levi Della Vida's suggestion that the name e*l elyon* was artificially compounded out of *'cl,* the lord of earth, and *'elyon,* the lord or heaven,[4] and that the. purpose of the narrative was to emphasize the identity of Melchizedek s (rod with the God of Abram. The view that the Genesis account proposed to fuse two gods was supported in times past by pointing to the fact that in verse 22 the name Yahweh was used in combination with *'el 'elyon.* There Abram is depicted as swearing "to the Lord [Yahweh] God Most High." However, there is some question as to whether the original text really contained the name Yahweh, especially since the Septuagint does not have it.

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This particular aspect of God's holiness is brought out by Hosea, when he says (11:9), "I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and 1 will not come to destroy." This is a significant bit of revelation, tor such sheer otherness as is ascribed to Yahweh would normally suggest destruction for all that is not holy. Since Yahweh's holiness is the source of life rather than of death, Isaiah appeals to the people of Jerusalem, menaced as they arc by the king of Assyria, that they let God be their fear and dread (8:13). That is to say, they were to let that awe which derives from manifesting Yahweh as holy hv their attitudes and actions displace the proximate fear of Rezin and the son of Remaliah. Here holiness is spelled out in terms of depth-psychology as a force that overcomes other fears. Inherent in holiness is its power of displacement.

Yahweh, as the Holy One of Israel, therefore is by his very nature the source of a progressive dethronement of deities in the history of Israel. His holiness is unique and therefore excludes the claims of other gods. This particular emphasis is very strong in the so-called priestly sections. There, however, it is applied primarily on the level of ritual, food, and sex because it was in these areas that God's people incurred the danger of syncretism. Since Yahweh was holy, his people must separate themselves from the religious practices of their Canaanite environment (Lev. 11:44 ff.). This kind of emphasis obviously strengthened the view that God is one.

True, the priestly application of Yahweh's uniqueness led to a point where holiness seemed available to men within a proper system of religious rites—a line that led directly into the post-Maccabean period, where the major features of Jewish religion as practised in the days of our Lord were determined. However, this was not the prophetic view of God's holiness. The prophets kept insisting that man has no power of autonomy, and that God is not within the realm of men's apprehension. It is in this sense that we must understand the Commandment (Ex. 20:4; Deut. 5:8), "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image." Here we find the implication that God is not equal to any other object. This principle is applied also to the adoration of heavenly constellations. The honk of Isaiah is particularly explicit in its polemic against the elaborate cosmogonies and cosmologies of Babylon (Isa. 40:25. 26):

To whom then will you compare me. that I should he like him? says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, is outside and above all things. Hence the

masses in Israel, exposed as they were to lesser gods, had to be reformed again and again. It Yahweh's holy will was to prevail there must be no distinction between the formal cult of the nation and private worship. Here is the source of the ethical element in Israel's monotheism. After all, holiness was a relational power, operative within the context of a covenant, whose terms directed themselves also to the individual in Israel.[11] Holiness, therefore, has its social implications for men in a covenant order of things. No one is more emphatic on this point than Amos, when, for example, the immoral behavior of a father and a son toward a girl is described in terms of profaning the Holy Name *(2:7)*.

Yahweh, then, does not keep his holiness to himself, He is the covenant God, with power to deliver his people. In other words, he is a jealous God, determined to carry out his redemptive plan in history against all possible opposition. At this point the uniqueness of Israel's God becomes particularly clear. The gods of other religions are also described as jealous: but this is mere envy, a self-centered concern for personal honor and official jurisdiction. There is none of this in Yahweh. The very fact that he had established a covenant provided the evidence that he was a God who had broken out of bis isolation to communicate with other beings. At the same time, this covenant was an expression of Yahweh's saving will. If men were to live, they would be obliged to obey this single will of One who had created them. Resistance was met with judgment, particularly against such as were "no-gods": the projection of man's wealth, success, and goods (Deut. 32:21). Yahweh, therefore, demands all. Since this is impossible, God is one who forgives. This seems to he the significance of Joshua's words at Shechem, "You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will forgive your transgressions and your sins" (Josh. 24:19).[12]

Transgression kindles God's anger, which is the other side of his covenant love. This wrath manifests itself in violent actions against those who oppose Yahweh's single will. At first this applies to Israel itself, even though it was God's own *seghulla* (Ex. 19:5). Joshua emphasized this point at the time of the Shechem covenant (cf. Josh. 24:20). In time, however, this jealousy is interpreted as God's vindication of Israel against its enemies. It becomes a jealousy *for* Israel, beginning with*the time of Ezekiel, where, for instance, we read (38:16), "In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me. when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes." From this point forward Yahweh's jealousy appears in eschatological contexts and soon loses itself in the weird fantasies of apocalyptic literature.

For the development of full monotheism in Israel just this shift in the concept of jealousy is of profound significance. It testifies to the determination on the part of God to see his will established against all opposing beings and entities, be they individuals, nations, or other gods. Universal authority is an essential ingredient of monotheism. Yahweh's zeal to fulfill his purposes in history is the driving power behind the creation of this kind of faith.

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11 Cf. Walther Eichrodt. *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig. 1933). I, 111.

12 The omission of the negative is supported by rather significant texts.

Historically speaking, Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal on the heights of Carmel ranks as a decisive moment in Israel. Here Yahweh's holiness was pitted against *the* Baal, not a local deity but a god of heaven, worshiped in Tyre and Sidon and introduced into Israel primarily by Jezebel [13] In this incident are concentrated the seven centuries of conflict between Yahweh and Baal, and Israel must make a choice between the two. They can not both be gods in Israel. Within this context Yahweh made himself known by a mighty miracle, and the people were moved to exclaim, "The Lord [i.e., Yahweh], he is God: the Lord, he is God" (I Kings 18:39). This is practical monotheism, understood as acceptance of that one God whose holiness in action excludes the possibility that other gods exist. But despite Israel's choice on Mt. Carmel, and despite the ascription to Yahweh of functions associated with Baal on the level of popular belief, such as fertility of the soil (Hos. 2:8) and political powers (Hos. 7:11), Yahweh remained a stranger to this world.[14] He continued to be "the wholly Other," hut as the living God and not as a philosophical abstraction.

In terms of faith-miles it is not far from Mt. Carmel lo the point at which Jeremiah can say of other gods that they are man's handiwork *(ma'aseh yädim),* where Ezekiel does not hesitate to speak of them as "manure gods (*gillulim*), and when the Psalms refer to them as "no-gods" *(lo' 'elohim*). For these gods have no history. They are newcomers (Deut. 32:17). Yahweh, however, has been Israel's God from of old (Ps. 74:2).

We must at this point insist that this movement toward full and unequivocal monotheism can not be interpreted in terms of an evolutionary process. On the contrary, this advance has its source in the absolute uniqueness of Yahweh as he revealed himself to Israel in his holiness and jealousy. We might speak of this as cumulative, rather than progressive, revelation.

It is of great significance to note in this connection that there is no Hebrew word for "goddess." Israel's God is never depicted as having a female counterpart,[15] except at Elephantine in Egypt during the sixth century—at a place far removed from the center of Israel's religious life. There we do have notices of Anat Bethel *(Anut Yahu)* as a consort of Yahweh. Otherwise there is no reference to a Hebrew goddess. This consistent insistence on the oneness of Yahweh makes it possible for Hosea (1-3) and Ezekiel (16:23) to speak of Yahweh as Israel's husband without fear of being misunderstood.

By the time of Ezra any mention of other gods in a context that referred to Yahweh was unthinkable.[16] Heathen gods were turned into angels or even demons, as in the Septuagint, translation of Psalm 95 and in certain apocryphal hooks. At the same time the transcendence of Yahweh got further emphasis by the use of such circumlocutions as "the heavens." "the power," "the Shekinah," "the place

13 G. v. Rad, *Thd AT,* p. 208.
14 Gerhard von Rad, *op. cit.,* I. 204; "Der grosse Fremdling in der Welt."
15 Eichrodt, *op. cit.*. I. 111.
16 *Ibid.,* p. 113.

of Yahweh's presence," or, most frequently, "the Name." The tetragram was not even to be uttered.

Somewhat parallel and contemporary to these developments runs a tendency to hypostasize the Torah or even Wisdom by ascribing to them a kind of pre-existence. The beginnings of this outlook are possibly found in the use of "the word of Yahweh" as almost distinct from God himself, and in the reference to the Spirit of God "moving over the face of the waters" in the account of creation. At any rate, it seems to be in order to suggest that this trend in Israel was intended to serve as a way of preparing God's people for that self-disclosure of himself whereby, in and through the incarnation, men would he. invited to recognize this God as being triune, that is, one God in three persons.